

VISN 4 MIRECC Bulletin

Highlights of recent activity and accomplishments of our MIRECC faculty

Announcements

Volume 2, Issue 3

VISN 4 MIRECC Celebrates 10 Years!

This fiscal year marks the 10th Anniversary of the VISN 4 MIRECC. The MIRECC will be celebrating by sponsoring special activities and commemorative communications in honor of this decade milestone!

Organizational News

David Oslin, MD has been appointed Acting Chief of Staff for the Philadelphia VA Medical Center. This appointment begins on Monday, May 3rd.

Gerald Goldstein, PhD, has been selected as one of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System nominees for the Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board's (FEB) Excellence in Government Awards Program.

Please join us in welcoming the newest staff member in Pittsburgh:

Gloria Klima, MA, recently joined the MIRECC as a Psychology Technician. She has extensive clinical and research experience in both interviewing and neuropsychological testing. Gloria has worked in a variety of settings including the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center and Allegheny General Hospital.

Research Accomplishments/News

Daniel Weintraub, MD, Grant Award: *Naltrexone for Impulse Control Disorders in Parkinson's Disease*; 3-year grant funded by Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research

Impulse control disorders (ICDs), including compulsive gambling, sexual behavior, buying, and eating, are increasingly recognized as a significant clinical problem in Parkinson's Disease (PD), occurring in up to 15% of patients. In spite of the clear association between dopamine agonist (DA) treatment and ICD development in most PD cases, the management of these disorders can be complex. A medication shown to be effective for the treatment of ICDs with minimal impact on Parkinsonism would allow many ICD patients to continue with their full-dose DA treatment. An 8-week double-blind, placebo-controlled trial is currently being conducted to test the efficacy and tolerability naltrexone for the treatment of ICDs in PD. Naltrexone is a long-acting opioid receptor antagonist, and studies have demonstrated that it helps in the treatment of pathological gambling in the general population.

VISN 4 MIRECC Pilot Project Program

The MIRECC invites proposals from individuals within VISN 4 for pilot projects on new and innovative research on comorbidity of mental illness and medical and/or substance abuse disorders and the treatment of mental health/substance abuse disorders in primary/specialty care as well as the treatment of general medical conditions in mental health care settings. The amount of the MIRECC award is a maximum of \$25,000 per year. The total term of the award is one year. The highest priorities for funding are for proposals that support 1) new, unfunded investigators for projects conducted at the VA, and; 2) novel and innovative work at the VA for established investigators within the VA or its affiliates. Letters of Intent (LOI) and full proposals are accepted on a monthly basis throughout FY10. The due date for both is the last Friday of the month (e.g. 4/30/10, 5/28/10).

For further details and a copy of the application, please contact **Steven Sayers, PhD** (steven.sayers@va.gov) or **Sara Chapman, MS, OTR/L** (sara.chapman@va.gov).

Selected Recent Publications

Steinhauer SR and Condray R. (2010). Psychophysiology of language processes in psychopathology: An overview of the special issue. *International Journal of Psychophysiology*, 75: 107-118.

Pettinati HM, **Oslin DW**, Kampman KM, Dundon WD, Xie H, Gallis TL, Dackis CA, **O'Brien CP**. (2010 Mar 15). A double-blind, placebo-controlled trial combining sertraline and naltrexone for treating co-occurring depression and alcohol dependence. [Epub ahead of print]. *Am J Psychiatry*.

Perlis RH, Ostacher MJ, Miklowitz DJ, Hay A, Nierenberg AA, **Thase ME**, Sachs GS. (2010 Mar). Clinical features associated with poor pharmacologic adherence in bipolar disorder: Results from the STEP-BD study. *J Clin Psychiatry*, 71(3):296-303.

Gordon A. (2010). *Physical illness and drugs of abuse: A review of the evidence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Salzer MS and Kundra, LB. (2010). Liability and referrals to self-help groups. *Psychiatric Services*, 61, 6-8.

Cornelius JR, Aizenstein HJ, Hariri AR. (2010). Amygdala reactivity is inversely related to level of cannabis use in individuals with comorbid cannabis dependence and major depression. *Addictive Behaviors*, 35:644-646.

Kasckow J, Liu N, **Haas G**, Phillips M. (2010 Mar 22). Case-control study of the relationship of depressive symptoms to suicide in a community-based sample of individuals with schizophrenia in China. [Epub ahead of print]. *Schizophrenia Research*.

Selected Education Activities

MIRECC Around the World

MIRECC Investigators travel the globe to conduct presentations. Take a look:

Last month, **Charles O'Brien, MD**, presented a lecture on the translation of animal models to clinical useful treatments in Grenoble, France at the European Neuroscience Research Conference. Dr. O'Brien also conducted a plenary lecture on *Addiction, AIDS and Hepatitis* in Biarritz, France this past October 2009.

Anne Germain, PhD, was a plenary speaker at the *Neuroimagerie de l'insomnie (Neuroimaging of Insomnia)*, Congrès du Sommeil, Société Française de Recherche et Médecine du Sommeil, Marseille, France. November 19-21, 2009.

Michael Thase, MD gave a keynote lecture on the treatment of depression at a regional scientific meeting of the World Psychiatric Association in Florence, Italy on March 12, 2010.

Jeffrey Yao, PhD, presented, *Phospholipids Turnover and Arachidonate Signaling in Schizophrenia* at the 2nd International Conference on Drug Discovery & Therapy, Dubai, UAE on February 2, 2010.

Matt Chinman, PhD has been invited by Renzo De Stefani, the chief of the Mental Health Department of Trento, a city located in northern Italy (Trentino Region) to present at a national meeting targeting professionals, users and families from all over Italy aimed at learning and spreading knowledge on the Expert Users and Families (our 'consumer providers') experience. The meeting will take place in June 2010 in Trento, Italy.

Upcoming Events:

**4th Annual VA National Mental Health Meeting:
Implementing a Public Health Model for Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Veterans**
Baltimore, MD, July 27-29, 2010

Conference registration is now open at:

<https://vaww.trace.lrn.va.gov/registration/Default.asp?CourseID=4377>

This meeting will allow for two and a half days of information sharing among mental health professionals and administrators on the current state of implementation of the Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook, new clinical initiatives, research-informed practices, as well as best practices identified by clinicians in the field. It is hoped that every Network and every RCS Region will have representation at this meeting.

Did you know?

**...that the new VISN 4 MIRECC website is up and running. Check it out at:
<http://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn4>.**

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